

Target Language Use in the Classroom: Teaching Speaking Differently

EFL classes often rely on textbook language in teaching speaking, which might limit students' scope and leave aside essential communicative strategies.

In this webinar, we will:

- focus on the use of real-world, authentic communication strategies in the Target Language (TL) for teaching speaking
- consider how to use Discourse Strategies (DSs) that help establish a language-rich environment and facilitate the authentic use of the TL in the EFL classroom
- examine strategies for incorporating authentic TL in our lessons



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Jane has always loved traveling and learning languages. She received a classical education in a variety of disciplines providing a solid foundation for her pursuit of a career in international education and language teaching. Jane is fluent in Russian, French, and English.

Jane has always wanted to share her passion and experience in second language acquisition with others. She obtained a Master's degree in Linguistically Diverse Education at the University of Northern Colorado and continued teaching while collaborating with faculty from all over the world. Jane leads a team of dedicated professionals in the Intensive English Program at University of Northern Colorado and teaches linguistics to students who seek endorsement in her field.



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Target Language Use in the Classroom: Teaching Speaking Differently



Discussion Outline

Reasons for more Target Language (TL) in the classroom

General ways to incorporate TL in lessons

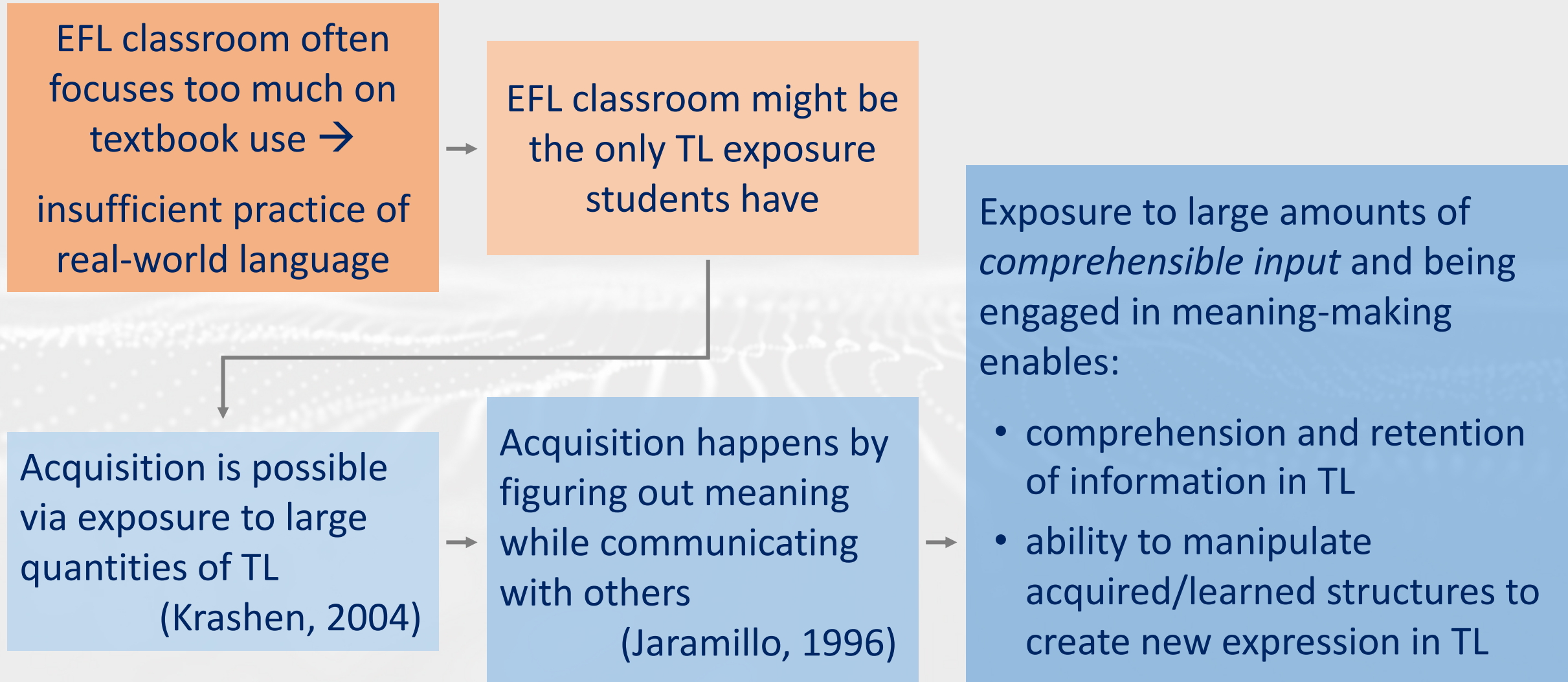
Authentic TL use: Discourse strategies

Fun classroom activities for TL and discourse strategy practice

Note!

Target Language – authentic, real-life English.

Why is it necessary to increase exposure to TL?



Reflection Time

**How do you incorporate
TL in your classes to
teach speaking?**

Share your thoughts in the chat.



Incorporating TL in the Classroom

Establish a language-rich environment:

- What the teacher says and uses
- Texts and videos
- What students access or produce
- Authentic realia in the classroom

Monitor and support student comprehension:

- Create a safe environment
- Use gestures
- Model
- Use visuals
- Build contextual background

Note!

Safe classroom environment – when students feel comfortable expressing themselves *without constant correction and evaluation*.

Consider *indirect error correction techniques* to promote students' experimentation with TL.

Incorporating TL in the Classroom

- ***For beginners, focus on meaning and utilize frequent comprehension checks:***
 - Raise one or two fingers to indicate answer to a question
 - Arrange a set of visuals to show comprehension
 - Select the best summary sentence from among several options
- ***Elicit talk that gradually increases in fluency, accuracy, and complexity:***
 - Ask Wh questions instead of Yes/No
 - Use more complex prompts
 - Use more complex descriptions
- ***Promote students' impromptu expression (ACTFL, 2020)***
- ***Model to demonstrate authentic interaction in TL***

Encouraging Authentic Interaction in the TL:

Focus on
Discourse Strategies &
Scenario-based Interaction





Key Definitions

- **Discourse** – a communication of thoughts and ideas orally
- **Discourse strategies** – different language tools (vocabulary, phrases, intonation) that are used to make communication clear, authentic, and effective.
- **Scenario-based teaching** – using real-life situations (e.g. at a café, being lost and asking for directions, calling on the phone, customer service, classroom debates etc.)

Discourse Strategies Allow:

- To express yourself clearly and within the cultural and contextual norms
- To demonstrate English communication skills in a low stake / high stake environment
- To sound more culturally aware while using TL

Reflection Time

What are some examples of discourse strategies?

Share your thoughts in the chat.



Discourse Strategy 1: Questions and Opinions

- Maintain conversation flow
- Demonstrate engagement
- Build fluency because you are using the language that you have in the moment without prior preparation and memorization



Expressing an Opinion

I'd like to say that ----

Here's my two cents....

---- is really important because -----

To add to that ----

What about ----

You know, -----

I see. For example ----

Let's consider ----

In my opinion -----

Questions Eliciting an Opinion

What do you think about ----

Have you considered ----

Can you tell me why you think so?

Why do you believe that -----

Do you think that -----

What about -----



Never Have I Ever Activity

Purpose: Facilitate student engagement and promote speaking

TL: Pattern practice (Present Perfect), Opinion-sharing and Eliciting Opinions

Timing/Frequency: 5-15 min



Instructions: Never Have I Ever

Possible categories: food, travel, sports, hobbies, movies, books etc.

1. Students extend their fingers on one hand to indicate the number of points they have. When playing as a large class, students should stand up too.
2. One student says something that they have never done, but that they believe other students might have. The name of the game is **Never have I ever...**, but go with **I have never...** to avoid confusion.
3. The students who have done the activity get a point and put one finger down. Those who haven't done the activity keep the same number of fingers up.
4. The process is repeated with other students making sentences (taking turns in pairs/small groups).
5. When students put all their fingers down they are out (they may still contribute sentences). The first to be out is the winner.

Let us demonstrate...



I have never had hot chocolate.

I have never been to Colorado.

I have never had a nightmare.

I have never gotten a bad grade.

Game time!

- Have your hand up with all 5 fingers extended
- Once you fold all of them send a 😊 in the chat
- Those who do it faster win

Ready, steady, go!



I have never traveled to Brazil.

I have never slept on a plane.

I have never tried raw egg.

I have never read Harry Potter.

I have never failed a test.

I have never participated in a marathon.

I have never seen a celebrity in real life.

Reflect and write down!

How would you use this or a similar game with your students?



Discourse Strategy 2: Repairing a Conversation and Interrupting

When your students:

- Do not understand
- Did not hear
- Misunderstood a portion of what was said
- Need to challenge an opinion they disagree with or a detail they can disprove



Your Turn!



What are some of the challenges for EFL students associated with asking for clarification or interrupting?

Please share your responses in the chat.

Repairing a Conversation

Could you repeat that please?

I didn't catch what you said.

Could you clarify/explain ----?

Sorry to interrupt, could you explain what you said before?

What was that? Come again? (more informal, sometimes impolite)

Polite Interruption

Pardon? (rising intonation)

Sorry to jump in, but -----

Could I ask a quick question?

Sorry, but could I ask -----?

I understand, what do you think about ----?

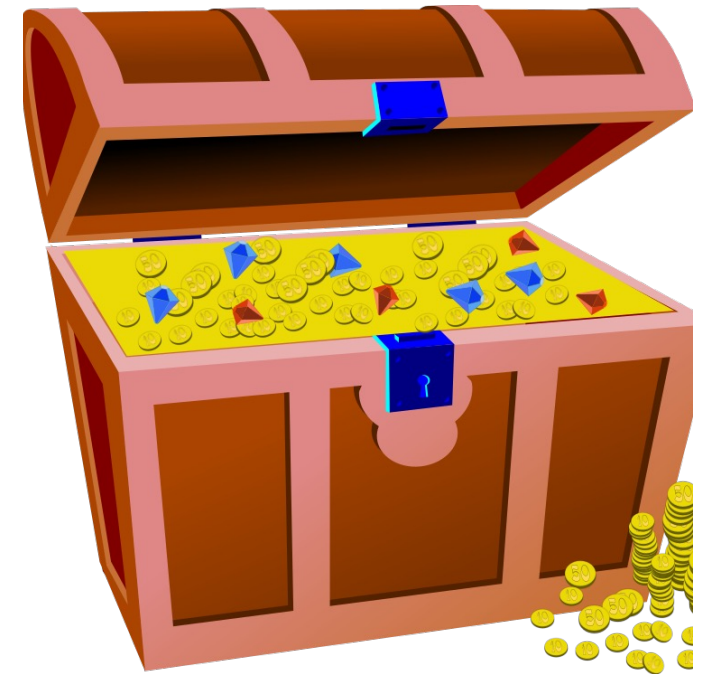
Before we go on, ----

Treasure Quest Activity

Purpose: Facilitate students' clarification and polite interruption in English

TL: Repairing a conversation and polite interruption discourse strategies

Timed game: The team who finds their item faster wins



Treasure Quest Game Directions

1. Hide a "treasure" item in the classroom or elsewhere.
2. Give students a map with missing information or advanced vocabulary/content.

Example: Follow the _____ path and turn _____ at the corner.

3. Students must use clarification questions to fill in the missing information in the map.
4. When responding to student questions, provide too much information to force them to use polite interruption to save time and get the necessary information quickly.



Game Adaptation

In a large class:

- Divide students into multiple teams
- Each team has a different map
- Hide multiple items

Basic – low intermediate levels:

- Use written prompts for the target discourse strategies
- Modulate the level of content difficulty (e.g. vocabulary)

Discourse Strategy 3: Agreement and Disagreement

When you hear someone else's idea, you can:

- Agree 100 %
- Agree Partially
- Disagree 100%
- Speaking to someone who either agrees or disagrees with everything you say feels pointless.



Agreement

I see your point.

I agree.

That's an interesting point/idea.

I see.

I think you might be right.

That seems correct.

I think we are on the same page here.

I subscribe to everything you just said

I concur with your assessment (formal).

Polite Disagreement

I'm sorry. What about -----

I do not think I can agree with this-----

I'm not sure. Have you considered -----?

I understand, but I would have to disagree on this one.

I can see how you would think that, but -----?

Building Consensus

Can we all agree that....?

So, do we think that ----- is -----?

It seems that we can all agree that -----?

I think that nobody is arguing that-----?

It seems that we are all for...

Reflection Time

Is disagreeing in English
similar to how you disagree
in your language/culture?





Agreement and Disagreement Activity

Purpose: Facilitate students' conversation skills and increase their confidence when expressing different and similar opinions

TL: Polite and culturally appropriate agreement and disagreement strategies

Timed game: 20-25 min

Agreement/Disagreement Activity

1. Prepare a few cards with incomplete statements on each.

Example: I am going to _____ this weekend.

2. Students will pick their cards in turns and finish the statements with something that others will have to disagree or agree with.

Example: I am going to fly to the Moon this weekend.

3. Those whose statements were disagreed with the most win.

Review: Discourse Strategies



- Expressing opinions and asking questions to elicit opinions
- Repairing a conversation and interrupting
- Agreeing, disagreeing, and building consensus

Note: Refer to the Discourse Strategies document for more examples



- Expressing opinions and asking questions to elicit opinions
- Repairing a conversation and interrupting
- Agreeing, disagreeing, and building consensus

What strategies do your students use often and which ones could you facilitate more? *Share your thoughts in the chat.*



Bringing it All Together with Debates

Purpose: Practice doing research, differentiating opinions from facts, using appropriate discourse strategies to prove your point

TL: Expressing opinions/eliciting opinions, agreement/disagreement, asking for clarification, polite interruption and building consensus discourse strategies

Time Required: Preparation 1-2 weeks; in-class: 35-45 min

How to Organize a Debate

1. Come up with a topic/thesis that is debatable

Example: Smart Technology Makes us Dumb!

2. Divide your class into two groups: those who support the statement and those who oppose it (*may want to run a quick class survey*)

3. Assign research tasks to each participant

4. Establish guidelines

Examples: use reliable sources, incorporate DS in your claims and argument

5. Go over debate examples (*examples: Intelligence2 Debates, Ted Talk*)

6. Practice debate portions

7. Have the debate in class



Assessment of Debates: *Rubric*

Note: Refer to the rubric exemplar for more details

Criteria	Excellent Points: 5	Good Points: 4	Needs Work Points: 3	Total Points
Agreement/ Disagreement strategies were used appropriately & effectively	Multiple strategies were used throughout the debate. The strategies were effectively used and helped the speaker achieve their communicative goal.	Some strategies were used during the debate. The strategies were mostly effective used and helped the speaker achieve their communicative goal.	Only a few strategies were used throughout the debate. The strategies were not as effective in helping the speaker achieve their communicative goal.	



Assessment of Debates: *Checklist*

Substitute a rubric with a simpler checklist:

- ☐ Used at least 2 agreement/disagreement strategies
- ☐ Expressed an opinion and supported it with evidence
- ☐ Used clarification and interruption strategies
- ☐ Built consensus by using suitable phrases
- ☐ Used key vocabulary

Reflection Time

How would you assess your students' debates?

Share your thoughts in the chat.



In this session, we covered...

Reasons for more Target Language (TL) in the classroom



Ways to incorporate TL in lessons



Authentic TL use: Discourse strategies



Fun classroom activities for TL and discourse strategy practice



Final Tips:

- ✓ Analyze your lesson routine
- ✓ Find 2 or 3 ways to incorporate authentic English discourse
- ✓ Encourage your students to experiment with the language
- ✓ Provide guidance and feedback along the way

References

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- World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages (2020). <https://www.actfl.org/>

Thank you!

Questions or concerns?

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Reflection Questions

1. How can teachers help students learn more than one way of expressing a language function? For example, how can teachers help students move beyond “I agree.” to “I think we are on the same page here”?
2. Where do you look for authentic examples of speech used in expressing language functions (discourse types)? Did you get any new ideas for your classes in today’s session?
3. What was your favorite activity from today’s webinar? Why?



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